

Ten years ago, the UN General Assembly recognized the plight of refugees around the world by dedicating June 20 as World Refugee Day. I congratulate the UN for bringing much needed attention and assistance to the millions of refugees around the world who are suffering hardships, having had their entire lives uprooted.

On December 4, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing that 2001 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Therefore, starting in 2001, June 20 was dedicated as World Refugee Day. Since Africa is home to the largest number of refugees, June 20 was selected as the date World Refugee Day would be observed in order coincide with the day that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) had previously designated to celebrate African Refugee Day.

Given our current involvement in the Middle East, I have grown particularly concerned with the status of Iraqi refugees. That is why I have introduced comprehensive legislation to address this humanitarian crisis and most recently an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010. My amendment addresses the plight of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and in May passed the House as part of the Defense Authorization bill.

My amendment requires the production of a needs assessment of U.S.-affiliated Iraqis and their status in order to develop a plan to expedite the resettlement of these U.S.-affiliated Iraqis who are at risk as the United States withdraws from Iraq. Nearly 50,000 U.S. troops are scheduled to withdraw from Iraq in August 2010, with the full troop withdrawal slated for December 2011.

Time is of the essence. We must put in place a plan to ensure that those Iraqis allies who have helped our country are protected.

I am honored to share in the celebration of World Refugee Day. I hope that many others will join me in recognizing the plight of refugees, both in Iraq and around the world, that have been displaced due to conflict. World Refugee Day continues to bring much needed attention to the hardships faced by so many in the global community.